

THE HOME CIRCLE

The Closing Year. *

'Tis midnight's holy hour, and silence
now
Is brooding like a gentle spirit o'er
o'er
The still and pulseless world. Hark!
on the winds
The bell's deep tones are swelling,—
'tis the knell
Of the departed year. No funeral
train
Is sweeping past; yet, on the stream
and wood,
With melancholy light, the moon-
beams rest
Like a pale, spotless shroud; the air
is stirred
As by a mourner's sigh; and on yon
cloud
That floats so still and placidly
through heaven,
The spirits of the seasons seem to
stand,—
Young Spring, bright Summer, Au-
tumn's solemn form,
And Winter with his aged locks,—
and breathe,
In mournful cadences that come
abroad
Like the far wind-harp's wild and
touching wail,
A melancholy dirge o'er the dead
year,
Gone from the earth forever.

'Tis a time
For memory and for tears. Within
the deep,
Still chambers of the heart, a spec-
tre dim,
Whose tones are like the wizard
voice of Time
Heard from the tomb of ages, points
its cold
And solemn finger to the beautiful
And holy visions that have passed
away,
And left no shadow of their loveli-
ness
On the dead waste of life. That spec-
tre lifts
The coffin-lid of Hope, and Joy, and
Love,
And, bending mournfully above the
pale,
Sweet forms that slumber there,
scatters dead flowers
O'er what has passed to nothingness.

The year
Has gone, and, with it, many a glo-
rious throng
Of happy dreams. Its mark is on
each brow,
Its shadow in each heart. In its swift
course
It waved its sceptre o'er the beauti-
ful,—
And they are not. It laid its pallid
hand
Upon the strong man, and the haugh-
ty form
Is fallen, and the flashing eye is dim.
It trod the hall of revelry, where
thronged
The bright and joyous,—and the
tearful wail
Of stricken ones is heard where erst
the song
And reckless shout resounded

It passed o'er
The battle-plain, where sword and
spear and shield
Flashed in the light of midday, and
the strength
Of serried hosts is shivered, and the
grass,
Green from the soil of carnage,
waves above
The crushed and mouldering skele-
ton. It came.

*This is No. 71 of our series of the World's Best Poems, selected especially for The Progressive Farmer by the Editor. In this series selections from the following authors have already appeared: Burns, Bryant, Mr. and Mrs. Browning, Byron, Goldsmith, Holmes, Kipling, Lanier, Longfellow, Lowell, Markham, Macaulay, Milton, Moore, Poe, Pope, and others.

And faded like a wreath of mist at
eve;
Yet, ere it melted in the viewless air,
It heralded its millions to their home
In the dim land of dreams.

Remorseless Time!
Fierce spirit of the glass and scythe!
—what power
Can stay him in his silent course, or
melt
His iron heart to pity? On, still on
He presses, and forever. The proud
bird,
The condor of the Andes, that can
soar
Through heaven's unfathomable
depths, or brave
The fury of the Northern hurricane,
And bathe his plumage in the thun-
der's home,
Furls his broad wings at nightfall,
and sinks down
To rest upon his mountain crag,—
but Time
Knows not the weight of sleep or
weariness,
And night's deep darkness has no
chain to bind
His rushing pinions.

Revolutions sweep
O'er earth, like troubled visions o'er
the breast
Of dreaming sorrow; cities rise and
sink
Like bubbles on the water; fiery isles
Spring blazing from the ocean, and
go back
To their mysterious caverns; moun-
tains rear
To heaven their bald and blackened
cliffs, and bow
Their tall heads to the plain; new
empires rise,
Gathering the strength of hoary cen-
turies,
And rush down like the Alpine ava-
lanche,
Startling the nations; and the very
stars,
Yon bright and burning blazonry of
God,
Glitter a while in their eternal
depths.
And, like the Pleiads, loveliest of
their train,
Shoot from their glorious spheres,
and pass away
To darkle in the trackless void,—yet
Time,
Time, the tomb-builder, holds his
fierce career,
Dark, stern, all-pitiless, and pauses
not
Amid the mighty wrecks that strew
his path,
To sit and muse, like other con-
querors,
Upon the fearful ruin he has
wrought.
—George D. Prentice.

Prima Facie Evidence.

An English lord of the manor was
returning home one night, when he
found a country bumpkin standing
by the kitchen door with a lantern in
his hand.

"What are you doing here?" the
lord asked, roughly.

"I've come a-coortin', sir," was the
reply.

"A-courtin? What do you mean
by that?"

"I'm a follower o' Mary, the kitchen
maid."

"Is it your habit to carry a lan-
tern when you are on such errands?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nonsense!" retorted the master,
angrily. "Don't talk such stuff to
me! Be off with yourself! Courting
with a lantern! When I was young
I never used such a thing."

"Nor, sir," said the yokel, moving
rapidly away. "Judgin' by the mis-
sus, I shouldn't think ye did."

Mrs. McKinley as She is To-day.

The most pathetic figure in the
world is the widow of President Mc-
Kinley. Her slender form in black,
and pale face, may be seen nearly
every day, and sometimes twice a
day, in a heavy dark carriage drawn
by a pair of black horses, an equip-
age of dignity and comfort without
display, going to and from the Mc-
Kinley home to the receiving sepul-
chre where the casket that contains
the remains of her husband is guard-
ed under the flag, and palms, and
flowers. The cemetery is extensive
and well kept, beautifully situated, a
charming grove, grassy and shady,
with pleasing roads and paths, and
many memorials that gleam in the
shadows or glitter in the sun.

Next to the temporary tomb pro-
tected by a detachment of regulars
commanded by a lieutenant of the
regular army from Alabama, the spot
of greatest distinction is that des-
tined to be the resting-place of the
illustrious Chief Magistrate. The
elevation chosen is a gradual slope
of unostentatious but commanding
conspicuity, overlooking a city of
homes and land of plenty, where the
utilities blend with the beauties. This
is as fit as that the tomb of Wash-
ington is beside the august Potomac;
that Lincoln should rest in the land
of Lincoln, the broad plains and
bright rivers of Illinois around him;
that Grant's matchless monument
should preside over the riverside of
the historic and legendary Hudson;
that the writer of the Declaration of
Independence should be uplifted in
his everlasting sleep upon a moun-
tain top of Virginia.

The walls of the parlor and sitting-
room of Mrs. McKinley's home are
decorated with many likenesses of
President McKinley, and the pale
lady in black dwells with them in the
past. The face of her husband is
ever before her. She has preferen-
ces and dislikes among his likenesses.
One rather grave and deep-lined face
does not please her, and she says of
it, "My husband never wore a scowl
like that—it is not a likeness." It
is, however, a work of art of high
grade. She did not tolerate the sug-
gestion that perhaps sometimes when
she was not present he had the look
she dislikes in a portrait. Her dis-
position of that suggestion was, "He
never looked like that." The artist
did idealize—and did not improve.
She inclines to favor the more youth-
ful pictures of the President. One
she cares for has been engraved for
the new ten-dollar bills, but it is not
the President the people knew so well
in the later years.

It has been said in zeal without
knowledge that Mrs. McKinley has
borne up wonderfully well under her
frightful trial, and is in better
health than before the tragedy. It
is not true. It is worth while that
the world that cares for her should
know the truth. She has aged since
that sad, dread September, as if
many bitter years had passed. There
is a depth of grief newly written in
her face, leaving the beauty of fea-
ture, but there is a haunting, trem-
ulous, witsful expression even keen-

er than her words: "There is now
nothing for me but to wait, and I
want to go."

There is a quivering of the eyelids,
lips and chin, the still signs of woe
that no light can chase away until
the dawn of the blessed, radiant
morning when she shall meet her be-
loved. Her faith that the loved, un-
seen, are not lost, is perfect. Her
intense consciousness that she is en-
ly waiting is the weariness unto
death.

It is the habit of Mrs. McKinley
to go to the cemetery, where her
heart and her interests are, for daily
devotion. She has frequently driven
over her accustomed route twice a
day. A trained nurse is constantly
with her sitting by her side, unless
some near friend is given the place,
and then the nurse sits with the
driver.

In all the tragedies of the stage
there is no scene more sorrowful or
dramatic situation more striking and
painful than Mrs. McKinley at the
coffin of her husband. As placed it
rests on a direct line with the open
gates. The outlook is eastward. A
sentinel walks there in the uniform
of the Army of the United States—
"Glory guards with solemn round."

The widow walks to the head of the
casket that rises on its supports from
the stone floor, draped so that the
colors of the flag glow through the
other decoration. No persuasion can
cause the mourner to cease from
weeping—leaning upon and bowed
over the evergreens, the palms, a few
fresh flowers and the flag, weeping
bitterly, lamentably, without re-
straint—until she summons resolu-
tion and totters away, tearful and
sobbing, sinks into her carriage and
falters to the old home.—From an
article by Murat Halstead in the
Saturday Evening Post, September
6th.

THE CHANGING YEAR

September, a Month of Inspiration and
Invigorating Outdoor Life.

Behold September! Tripping from
the hills she comes and lo! the mys-
tic spell of August's weaving breaks
at her touch. Indolence flees to the
mistress who has gone before, and
the languor and lassitude and lazy
contentment of midsummer gives
way to a quickening of vital forces
and the inspiration of endeavor. Fair
September? Not the wealth of floral
tribute of her sister months doth she
bring, but of the fulness of the har-
vest doth she scatter on every side.
Sere and yellow leaves flutter from
the trees; they are her pledges in
gold that there is no death, and April
shall redeem them. The hills robe
themselves in purple in the twilight
hour and the air is vibrant with the
plaint that "Katy did" and "Katy
didn't." Once more the feathered
hosts fill copse and grove and garden
shrubbery, and if there be a new
note, a minor chord, not present in
their songs of the spring, therein is
the promise that they go but for a
little while. The clear air has in it
a tonic which sets the rich blood to
racing gloriously and fills with the
desire of accomplishment the vigor
which seeks expression in the world's
work. It is the month of inspira-
tion.—Country Life In America.